

# Regional Workshop on MERS-CoV and 'One Health'

*Organized by*



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



*In collaboration with*



World Health  
Organization



*Doha, Qatar  
27–29 April 2015*

## *Background of the Workshop*

Several committee meetings, technical consultations and workshops were convened on Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) either jointly or separately by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Following the detection of MERS-CoV in a herd of camels linked to confirmed human infections in Qatar and the spread of MERS-CoV infection geographically, the WHO/EMRO organised a consultative meeting to determine public health agenda on MERS-CoV, held in Cairo in December 2013 and its [Report](#) is available online. In May 2014, FAO in collaboration with Oman organised a regional technical consultation on MERS-CoV in Animal Species, the main outputs of which are summarized as [Muscat Declaration](#). In July 2014, OIE convened a second scientific expert Ad-hoc Group meeting on MERS-CoV infection in animals in Paris and its [Recommendations](#) are also available online. The WHO's IHR Emergency Committee on MERS-CoV met for the eighth time in February 2015 and provided [WHO Statement on MERS-CoV](#).

All these meetings have contributed to increased awareness and understanding of the complex epidemiological features of MERS-CoV, including the role of animals although lots of questions are still unanswered as of today. The current predominantly workshop focuses on MERS-CoV in animals and implementation of One Health at a national level, in the context of animal-human interface.

As of 2 April 2015, the global total of cases of MERS-CoV [reported by local health authorities worldwide](#) since April 2012 stood at 1,118, including 458 deaths related to the MERS-CoV infection with a case fatality rate of 40.97 percent. The majority of the reporting countries are in the Arabian Peninsula. Although many cases have been likely acquired infection through human-to-human transmission, the primary cases in clusters are more likely to have been acquired through contact with non-human sources of the virus, including environmental or unknown animal sources. Although the pattern of transmission appears relatively unchanged, the overall situation and the possibility of international spread remain of concern.

Coronaviruses are widespread in animal species and they do infect livestock and a wide range of wild species, including bats, rodents and wild birds. The MERS-CoV is genetically related to coronaviruses found in bats in Africa, Europe, North America and Asia.

Several studies have reported high proportions of camels with antibodies against MERS-CoV or a closely related virus both in countries where human cases were detected and also in countries with no reported cases. Some of these studies have shown that MERS-CoV has been circulating in the camels for more than two decades.

With the onset of spring season, as in year 2014, a sharp increase in the number of human cases particularly in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is observed in February 2015.

In spite of research efforts over the last months, several unanswered questions remain as to the emergence of this MERS-CoV and the mechanisms of its spread. There is an urgent need to re-focus investigations on the epidemiology of MERS-CoV in animal species with particular reference to the human-animal interface, to prevent further human infections and potential spill-overs.

As part of their ongoing efforts to respond to the threats of MERS-CoV, FAO and the State of Qatar in collaboration with OIE and WHO are convening a Regional workshop on MERS-CoV and 'One Health' in Doha (Qatar) on 27–29 April 2015.

### ***Objectives of the Workshop***

The main objectives are:

- to present the latest research findings on the disease and the current knowledge in affected countries on the potential role of animal species in the epidemiological cycle of MERS;
- to analyze the recent developments in diagnostic and surveillance tools to support animal investigations;
- to review the 'One Health' practices with a focus on MERS-CoV in the affected countries, in relation to international standards, and ways for improving them;
- to identify the concrete steps and roadmap for coordinated actions at the sub-regional level with a view to halting the spread of the disease; and
- to discuss and agree on mechanisms for intra-regional and global cooperation in investigations, research and knowledge sharing and the role of international and regional organizations.

### ***Target Group of the Workshop***

The workshop is primarily targeting the Chief Veterinary Officers and animal health experts, as well as Public Health officials in charge of MERS-CoV issues from the region. It will be attended by the representatives from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in addition to other concerned countries from the region. Key MERS-CoV experts and scientists in identified research institutions and technical staff from FAO, OIE, and WHO as well as representatives from the relevant regional organizations will attend.

## ***Contacts: the organizing Committee:***

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